

# USPS Honors Four Choreographers

The first day of issue site and date for the U.S. Postal Service's "Innovative Choreographers stamps" is July 28 in Los Angeles. The four Forever stamps (priced at 45 cents) were produced in pressure-sensitive adhesive (PSA) panes of 20 stamps.

The four choreographers on the stamps are deemed to have changed the art of dance. According to the USPS "designed to look like posters advertising a performance, the stamp art is intended to capture the luminosity and mystery of a live dance performance." Art director Ethel Kessler designed the stamps using illustrations in watercolor on vintage paper by artist James McMullan, well known for his work for the Lincoln Center Theater in New York City.

The word choreography literally means "dance-writing" from the Greek "khoreia" (choral dance) and the Latin "graphie" (writing). It first appeared in American English dictionaries in the 1950s.

Isadora Duncan developed a seemingly spontaneous style that paved the way for modern dance. The stamp design reflects her interest in classical Greek dance forms and shows the seemingly effortless style that she developed. Radical for its time, her linking of movement and expressive-ness garnered her worldwide critical acclaim.

José Limón's works are considered classics and continue to be performed today. He drew inspiration from history, literature, and religion, and used natural movement and gesture in his choreography, often commenting on sociopolitical realities. His virile, powerful works elevated



the importance of the male dancer in modern dance. On the stamp he is shown in a performance pose.

Katherine Dunham helped establish African-American dance as an art form. Founder of one of the first African-American dance companies in the United States, she was the

first choreographer to develop a formal dance technique that combined Caribbean and African dance elements with aspects of ballet. On the stamp she is shown in a pose from her critically acclaimed ballet *L'Ag'Ya*.

Bob Fosse, celebrated for directing and choreographing musicals on both stage and screen, made dance accessible to millions. He is shown on the set of *Sweet Charity* (1969). Fosse received one Oscar, three Emmys, and nine Tony awards during his career.

A total of 25 million Choreographers stamps were printed by the Banknote Corporation of America division of Sennett Security Products using an offset process with "USPS" microprinting as an added protection against counterfeiting, which is easier with offset printing than it is with engraved printing. Plate numbers in the four corners of the pane consist of the letter "S" to identify Sennett as the primary contractor, followed by six single digits, one for each print color, black, cyan, magenta, yellow, blue and tan.

Ethel Kessler also designed the four American Choreographers stamps issued by the USPS on May 4, 2004. Those stamps (Sc. 3840-43) honored George Balanchine, Martha Graham, Agnes de Mille, and Alvin Ailey.